



Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond
February 25 – March 1, 2013

Edmonton cops ignored rape of First Nations' teen, youth worker alleges

[Sun News](#)

February 25, 2013

Allison Salz



Youth court worker Mark Cherrington stands in front of the Edmonton Law Courts building. Credits: TOM BRAID/QMI AGENCY

EDMONTON -- A city youth worker claims city police are dismissing violence against aboriginal women after a First Nations teen was allegedly raped but ended up being the one in

handcuffs when she called police.

The revelation came out in an Edmonton youth courtroom Thursday, where the 18-year-old woman appeared on a charge resulting for a breach of release conditions dating back to when she was a minor.

Youth worker Mark Cherrington attended the hearing, where the girl said she had been raped at a west-end motel Feb. 17. Cherrington said the girl was bloodied, bruised and swollen, and missing a tooth.

She called her mom, who contacted the police.

Officers took the woman into custody for not completing court-ordered community service as well as an apology letter in connection to the breach of release conditions.

"They told her that once she was out of jail she was more than welcome to come down to the cop shop and fill out a report," Cherrington said.

"Sure they had a warrant, they have an obligation there too. But which is more important, not completing an apology letter, or a girl who had been brutally assaulted."

Cherrington also said a rape kit wasn't performed until three days later.

The teen was housed at the Edmonton Remand Centre in a holding cell with two other women and ended up sleeping on the floor.

The woman wasn't allowed to shower or bathe, in an effort to preserve evidence.

"It's bizarre. It was a pile of mistakes, first by the police and then the remand centre," Cherrington said.

"There's no way, that being five days into this that I should have been the first responder to her sexual assault."

The woman's lawyer is going to file a complaint with police, Cherrington said.

She was kept in the remand centre Thursday and was supposed to be released Friday night.

"The police force is dismissing aboriginal women. The EPS pulled out of Project KARE. They're not taking violence against aboriginal women seriously," he said.

"Me being white, if I made a complaint (like she did,) I'm sure police would have dealt with it differently."

Court rules Manitoba chief crafted a "bogus" resolution to keep power

[The Canadian Press](#)

Feb 24, 2013 10:13 AM CST

A federal court judge has ruled that the former chief and three councillors of a Manitoba aboriginal reserve used "illegitimate means," including a "bogus" resolution, to cling to power when members of their own community threw them out of office.

Justice James Russell ruled that Terrance Nelson ceased being chief of the Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation on Sept. 20, 2011 — the day the community's Custom Council removed him over his refusal to co-operate with an audit into the band's financial affairs.



A federal court has ruled that Terrance Nelson used illegitimate means including a bogus resolution, to cling to power. (CBC)

The Custom Council is the band's governing authority and is made up of one representative from each family in the community.

Nelson was a candidate last year for the top job at the Assembly of First Nations.

Russell ruled that Nelson, along with several other band councillors who were also removed, attempted to dissolve the Custom Council.

When that didn't work, Russell said they "attempted to concoct and/or rely upon a fake Custom Council resolution" to reinstate themselves.

The dispute caused financial havoc for the community, with financial institutions freezing the band's accounts and band employees unsure who to take orders from.

Russell ruled that Kenneth Henry Jr., who was elected in a byelection to replace Russell, is the legitimate chief.

"The evidence before the Court establishes reprehensible, scandalous and outrageous conduct on the part of the Nelson Respondents," Russell wrote in the ruling, which was released Thursday.

Nelson withdrew as a candidate during the multiple rounds of voting for the chief of the Assembly of First Nations last July after receiving few votes.



The community of Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation where Terrance Nelson was once chief. (CBC)

He threw his support behind Pam Palmetier, who eventually lost to Shawn Atleo.

Earlier this year, he took part in an Idle No More blockade of a Canadian National rail line in Manitoba.

The Custom Council levelled allegations of financial mismanagement against Nelson starting in 2007, Russell wrote.

As a result of the allegations, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada appointed a third-party manager to administer the band's funds.

A forensic audit was ordered in 2007, and Russell wrote that Nelson refused to provide the auditor with records, co-operate with the process, or attend Custom Council meetings.

This eventually resulted in a decision by Custom Council to remove him from his position as chief, Russell said.

Henry was elected in a byelection in October 2011 to replace Nelson.

In protest, councillors Michael Littlejohn, Evelyn Patrick and Keith Henry refused to attend to their duties as councillors, so the Custom Council ousted them, too.

Despite their removal, Russell wrote that Nelson, as well as the three ousted councillors, continued to hold themselves out as chief and council.

"On 31 October 2011, documents were authored that made it appear as though the family units of (the community) had met and appointed new family representatives to the Custom Council to replace the actual Custom Council," Russell wrote.

"On 1 November 2011, 16 individuals signed a document which they called a 'Custom Council Resolution' purporting to rescind the decisions of the real Custom Council and reappointing the Nelson Respondents as Chief and Band Councillors."

However, Russell wrote that a representative of the Custom Council told the court that she wasn't aware of the resolution and wasn't notified about it.

Affidavits were also submitted to the court claiming that many of the people who signed the resolution were direct family members of Nelson and the other former councillors.

The affidavits also claimed that people who purported to be the representatives of certain families were not the actual representatives, Russell's ruling said.

Russell said the confusion made it difficult for the community to function until the Federal Court issued an injunction on Feb. 2, 2012 ordering Nelson and the former councillors to cease holding themselves out as chief and councillors.

Russell has ordered Nelson and his fellow former councillors to pay court costs.

The federal auditor's report into the band's finances found no criminal activity but it questioned some of the financial spending, including \$500,000 of undocumented loans, \$2,500 Christmas bonus for chief and council and \$2.1 million to develop land for a gaming centre and gas bar.

In March 2011, Nelson said a conspiracy involving federal government officials was behind the auditor's report, and that it was meant to undermine his chances of re-election as chief in elections later that month.

Brazeau incident began with argument over aboriginal issues, police warrant says

[Montreal Gazette](#)

February 26, 2013

Peter Woods



Sen. Patrick Brazeau leaves a courthouse in Gatineau, Que., after he was formally charged with assault and sexual assault Friday, Feb. 8, 2013. Photograph by: THE CANADIAN PRESS/Adrian Wyld, Postmedia News

OTTAWA – Suspended Senator Patrick Brazeau's alleged assault of a woman stemmed from an argument about aboriginal affairs, according to court records.

Brazeau, 38, was arrested on the morning of Feb. 7 and later charged with assault and sexual assault. He has pleaded not guilty and none of the charges has been proven in court.

According to police search warrant records for Brazeau's Gatineau home, the complainant told police Brazeau pushed her hard enough to break a stair railing she was holding onto.

According to the warrant documents, police received a 911 call from a crying woman at 9:04 a.m. The woman hung up, but called again two minutes later. She said Brazeau had hit her, she had suffered bruises and Brazeau was holed up in a room upstairs, the documents say. She said he had pushed her on the stairs and punched her in the arms, the records show.

Police soon arrived and arrested Brazeau, who was transported to a police station, spoke to a lawyer and was put in a cell, according to the documents.

The alleged victim later told police in a videotaped interview that Brazeau had asked her to leave his house that morning during a dispute over aboriginal issues, which had started the previous night.

The aboriginal senator has been an outspoken critic of the grassroots indigenous Idle No More movement, and drew fire for disparaging comments he made about Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence after her protest fast near Parliament Hill.

The alleged victim told police Brazeau became aggressive as she asked for time to gather her things, allegedly pushing her, hitting her in the arms and ripping a bra and blouse that she was holding, according to the documents.

The alleged victim told police Brazeau grabbed one of her breasts in an aggressive way and brought down her pants, breaking the attached button and zipper, according to the documents.

She also said he put his hand around her neck and hit her in the arm with his fists. The complainant also told police that Brazeau spat in her face and swore at her in French and English, the records say.

According to the documents, the woman said Brazeau pushed her in the stairway, breaking the railing she was holding onto. He put his finger in her rear and she told him she

In the warrant documents, police said they were looking for a ripped bra and blouse, as well as a pant button.

Brazeau was kicked out of the Conservative caucus hours after his arrest on Feb. 7. The nature of the details in the documents could shed some light on the Prime Minister Stephen Harper's decision to move quickly to expel Brazeau from his caucus.

The following week, Brazeau was officially suspended from the Senate. While suspended, Brazeau can still collect his salary of \$132,300, but will need to seek approval for further expenses from the Senate Internal Economy Committee.

Brazeau was released on Feb. 8 on \$1,000 bail. He is not allowed to make any contact with the complainant. His next court appearance is March 22.

A publication ban protects the alleged victim's identity.

Brazeau has kept a low profile since his arrest, declining to speak with reporters at the courthouse after his release, and when leaving the Senate the day of his suspension. Calls to his Senate office went unanswered on Tuesday.

But on Friday, the senator reactivated his controversial Twitter account last week and sent out a tweet, which said "I'm wounded not, but I'm not slain. I'm brusied (sic) and faint they say Just let me lie and bleed awhile; I'll not be long this way."

© Copyright (c) Postmedia News

Aboriginal support revives Okanagan park proposal

[Globe and Mail](#)

February 26, 2013

Mark Hume



National Park – south Okanagan, BC: A proposed national park for the South Okanagan Similkameen area has ignited a heated debate that is pitting neighbour against neighbour. While many see the park as a way to save the area's fragile ecosystem and help ensure that the rampaging development in the South Okanagan does not continue unabated, ranchers and First Nations groups see it as a threat to their traditional way of life. Vaseux Lake Photo (Gwen Barlee/Wilderness Committee)

An alliance of four Indian bands has expressed support for a new national park reserve in the South Okanagan, a hot, dry region where sweeping pine forests give way to natural grasslands and sagebrush flats.

The announcement by the Okanagan Nation Alliance on Tuesday should give momentum to a proposal that seemed dead last year when the B.C. government withdrew from talks with Parks Canada, saying there wasn't enough local support for the proposal.

Chief Robert Edward, of the Lower Similkameen band, said native groups in the area are united in wanting to see those talks resumed, with input from first nations.

"We want to be part of that discussion," said Chief Edward.

He said native people in the area were initially worried about the park proposal, which was put forward by then-prime minister Jean Chrétien in 2003, because of concerns that aboriginal title and rights might be lost.

But an in-depth study by the Okanagan National Alliance, he said, has laid those concerns to rest.

And now the bands would like to see talks about the proposal resume.

And Chief Edward said a larger area than was initially proposed should be looked at, so that some areas sacred to native people can be included.

"This is a very, very significant announcement," said Gwen Barlee, policy director for the Wilderness Committee.

"This park proposal wasn't going to move forward without their support. ... I am thrilled to bits."

Ms. Barlee, who is based in Vancouver but who grew up in the Okanagan, said the proposed park reserve would cover an area near Osoyoos and Keremeos that is under increasing pressure for development.

"Every time I go back, I see another little piece has been lost.

"If we don't seize the moment, the opportunity to save it will be lost," she said.

The Okanagan Nation Alliance said in its report that chiefs will be writing to the B.C. Premier and cabinet asking that negotiations over the park be resumed.

Kevin McNamee, director of the protected areas branch for Parks Canada, said discussions were halted last year when the province withdrew from the process.

He said Parks Canada cannot proceed, except in partnership with B.C., and he wouldn't speculate on whether he expected the province to ask for a resumption of talks.

"For now, both governments have agreed not to proceed," he said.

Rob Fleming, environment critic for the B.C. NDP, and Dick Cannings, a well-known naturalist and author who is running for the NDP in the Okanagan, said in a joint statement that it is now up to the provincial government to get the issue moving again.

"It's time for the B.C. government to get back to the table and work with local communities, businesses, first nations and Parks Canada," Mr. Cannings said.

Mr. Fleming said a national park in the area "could bring substantial cultural, economic and ecological benefits to this unique region."

In a statement, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society said establishing a national park in the South Okanagan would give the area a substantial economic boost.

"It will create stable, long-term jobs, increase visitor spending and generate tax revenue. On average, the creation of a national park in B.C. increases provincial GDP by \$37.1-million per year," CPAWS stated.

B.C. Environment Minister Terry Lake could not immediately be reached for comment, but he issued a brief statement saying he is aware of the Okanagan Nation Alliance report and needs time to review it.

"The province recognizes the important conservation values in the South Okanagan area, including some of the most ecologically valuable grasslands in British Columbia," he said in an e-mail.

Manitoba to get First Nations kidney-screening program: \$1.6 million program aims to cut health-care costs

[CBC News](#)

Feb 27, 2013 12:51 PM CST



These machines will be brought to First Nation communities in Manitoba to screen for kidney disease. (Tiar Wilson/CBC)

Mobile kidney-screening units are coming to

Manitoba's First Nation communities.

A new \$1.6 million program will have health professionals travel to First Nations communities across the province for kidney disease screening.

Communities will be provided with screening and follow-up care and education.

The province is aiming to cut down on dialysis and emergency care through the program.

Manitoba currently has some of the highest rates of kidney disease in Canada, and aboriginal people are three times more likely to experience serious outcomes associated with the disease, such as kidney failure.

The program will launch in March, which is Kidney Health Month in Canada.

Tar Sands Opponents Form Cross-Border Alliance to Stop Keystone XL Pipeline

[Between the Lines](#)

Feb. 27, 2013

Excerpt of speech by Jackie Thomas, chief of Saik'uz First Nation in Canada, recorded and produced by Melinda Tuhus at the Feb. 17, 2013 Keystone Pipeline rally in Washington, D.C.



Leaders of native nations in both Canada and Oklahoma were among the speakers at the "Forward on Climate" rally in Washington, D.C. on Feb. 17, which saw an estimated 35,000 to nearly 50,000 people supporting the demand that President Obama deny a federal permit for construction of the Keystone XL pipeline. The pipeline would transport dirty tar sands from Alberta, Canada to refineries on the Texas Gulf Coast, mostly for export.

The southern leg of the pipeline, already under construction in Texas, has generated powerful local opposition through groups such as the Tar Sands Blockade. Tar sands have a much bigger carbon footprint than other fossil fuels. Groups like the Sierra Club and 350.org, main sponsors of the Washington protest rally, have been calling on Obama to live up to his post-election pledges to tackle climate change and nix this project.

One of the native leaders who spoke at the rally was Jackie Thomas, a chief of the Saik'uz First Nation in northern British Columbia. She is a co-leader of the Yinka-Dene Alliance, a coalition of first nations and others working to stop the proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline from taking tar sands from Alberta through British Columbia to the Pacific Ocean for export. In this excerpt from her talk, she

addresses the problems tar sands extraction has already caused and about the alliances that are growing in Canada and the U.S. to stop the tar sands pipeline projects.

JACKIE THOMAS: I am a mother of four, and a grandmother of one, and I was raised by my own grandmother. She was a traditional medicine woman of my people, and I learned early on the value of our environment. And what she told us is that when we take care of the land, the land will take care of us. If we destroy this land, we will destroy ourselves. I speak on behalf of the Yinka Dene Alliance. We formed an alliance to stop the Enbridge Northern Gateway Project, which plans to bring tar sands oil to the coast of British Columbia, which will then be put on tankers to go to the Asian markets. It puts at risk my neighbors to the east of me, that live at the tar sands. The government doesn't recognize these people, and these people have been dying of mysterious cancers, their water is polluted, their animals are sick, and Mother Earth is sick. Our Alliance is using our own laws to protect our lands, and for centuries we have done this. We created the Save the Fraser Declaration. Currently we have 135 First Nations in Canada signed up to this. We have built alliances and will be signing international documents with other nations of the indigenous world in the future. We have also been endorsed by many municipalities in Canada, most recently, the city of Vancouver, Mayor Gregor Robertson, made a proclamation that Dec. 13, 2012, was Save the Fraser Declaration Day for the city of Vancouver. This was very brave, because my government -- the Canadian government -- has been calling me an environmental extremist, a radical and an enemy of Canada. All I want, and my people want to do, is protect this land, and this water, that is sacred. This water that we're talking about has no color, this water that we're talking about is not just water for my own people. It is water also for my neighbor ranchers, my neighbor farmers, who live next door to me. It's a human issue, and it impacts everyone. We are all connected. Enbridge really has brought our communities together in Canada, because we've had oil spills and you've also had oil spills in this country, because oil will spill, it's just a matter of when. They've spilled in the Kalamazoo, in Red Deer, Alberta, in the territories of the Lubicon Cree, in the Northwest Territories, the Dene brothers and sisters I know from the Northwest Territories, and of course, who can forget Exxon Valdez. Of course also, in most recent memory we've had the BP spill, which was on the news day after day, month after month. Never in my life have I ever seen white and native work together until now. Thank you, Enbridge, for doing this work for me. (laughter).

In Canada, First Nations are always expected to be the sacrificial lambs for our government in terms of the economy -- like the economy is a human being, like the economy is more important than our land and our water. Water is a non-renewable resource, and we can't take it for granted. The Yinka Dene Alliance have never signed a treaty; we have never gone to war; we have never ceded our territories in British Columbia, and we never will. Under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, the Yinka Dene Alliance have not given our free, prior

and informed consent to this project. In Canada there's a judicial review process going on right now. While the process is still underway our government has made public statements to the effect that this project will go through. Over the past year my country has made changes to environmental laws that has eased the burden for industry to [in]discriminately go forward with these projects, and part of our Idle No More movement also has been to let the general public know that we cannot keep taking out of greed; we should only take out of need.

I'm here to ask you and to ask the world to help us. The Canadian government has made it clear they will approve Enbridge. We need your help to stand with us. We need your prayers. I need someone to stand with me as the bulldozers come. I'm laying down my life. (cheers)

This segment was recorded and produced by Between The Lines' Melinda Tuhus. Learn more about the issues related to tar sands extraction and the Keystone XL pipeline by visiting ForwardonClimate.tumblr.com and the other links to articles and websites below.

Silent Plains ... The Fading Sounds of Native Languages

[National Geographic](#)

February 28, 2013

Frederic Briand of The Mediterranean Science Commission (CIESM)

'All things must pass,' sang George Harrison. With time, suns turn into ice, civilizations into dust, and species go extinct. And so 'black dwarfs,' 'biodiversity loss,' not to forget 'Armageddon,' have all become part of our daily alphabet.

Strange planet... though the risk of a 6th species extinction wave is quite real ([see my previous post](#)) and that of a future collision with a [large asteroid not entirely negligible](#).

At the same time, native languages throughout the world are vanishing, fast (see the recent feature "[Vanishing Voices](#)" in [National Geographic magazine](#) and NG's [Enduring Voices](#) project).

But that does not rate as headline news. If the power of James Fennimore Cooper's narrative still makes *The Last of the Mohicans* a most present, although rather erroneous (1) memory, who knows of the recent disappearance of dozens of languages, like Kanoe (Brazil), Iowa (central USA), Mangala (western Australia), or Kamassian (Siberia, Russia) – each replaced by the dominant tongue of their administrative rulers?

There are interesting parallels to draw, up to a point, between linguistic and biological diversity. On a world map, their hotspots are distributed in roughly comparable ways, owing to the same causes and effects: the protection afforded by dense forests, habitat heterogeneity, forbidding mountain ranges, climate stability, the remoteness of ocean islands, etc. No wonder then that Papua New Guinea, which combines all these attributes, would emerge as the top location for both

species (8% of world total) and *linguistic* richness, with 830 living tongues (12% of world total). No wonder either that in the high mountains of the Caucasus – another biodiversity hotspot – one finds on a territory no larger than the Iberian peninsula as many as five distinct linguistic *families*, compared to only three for the whole of Europe.

But the similarities between biological and linguistic diversity end there, as other patterns have nothing in common. Every ten years, on average, two species of mammals go extinct (a high rate spun by global environmental degradation) compared to ... 250 languages that vanish in the same time span. This is not trivial, and it reminds us that the life and death cycle of human tongues has more to do with the historical extension of agriculture, emergence of centralized states, colonialism, cultural imperialism, and global communication networks than with Darwinian evolution.

Close to 7,000 distinct languages are still spoken today, more than half originating from just eight countries: Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Nigeria, India, China, Mexico, Cameroon, and Zaire. It is expected that by 2100 nearly half of today's living tongues will have disappeared. If so, humanity will be considerably poorer. For each time a native language dies out, it is a distinct universe of mental constructs, with unique ecological wisdom acquired through millennia of direct contact with nature, which is lost. Gone is the refined Cheyenne technique of prairie management by fire in the dry mid-summers, almost gone the mysterious understanding of Namibian savanna animals by !Kung San hunters, and highly endangered the immense knowledge of the sea and its resources inherited by traditional fishing peoples from Oceania to the Arctic.



Prairie Meadows Burning. Oil canvas by George Catlin, 1832. National American Art Museum.

Among the thousand languages that will soon vanish, some are incredibly original, 'language isolates' on their own, others incredibly complex. Consider the way in which we count cattle, fish, or stars. By counting on their own fingers (and toes), humans have

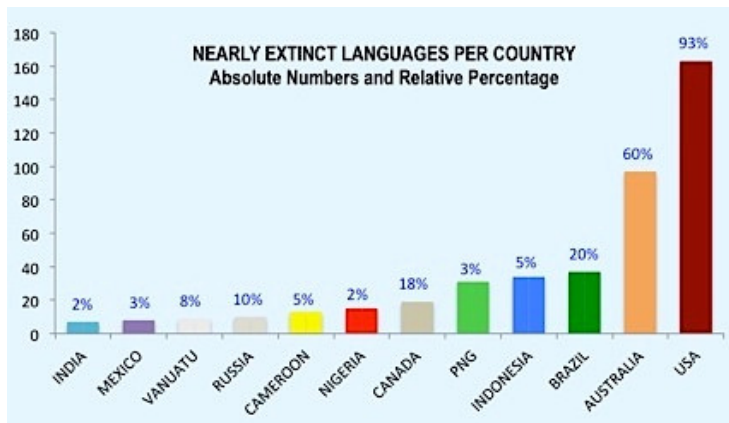
devised numerical systems with base 5, 10, or 20, which in turn shape how the world around us is expressed. For the Melpa, in the western New Guinea highlands, the word for '10' is 'two-thumbs' – our eight fingers augmented by two thumbs.

In Central America, the Maya for their part used a base-20 numerical system, the core of complex cycles in their astronomical calendar. This characteristic, together with the very rare VOS (Verb- Object – Subject) word sequence that survives in extant Maya tongues, proved essential to decipher the syllabic hieroglyphs that the

pre-Columbian Maya left behind on stelae and temples in the dense Peten and Yucatan jungles.

The complexity, the very richness of a language is not immediately obvious. It is not even a function of the number of distinct words it contains. In so-called 'polysynthetic languages' (Caucasus, Himalaya, New Guinea mountains), the sophisticated addition of countless prefixes and suffixes will allow the speaker to express in just one word what would require a full sentence in English. One extreme example of that was related by Georges Dumezil, a French ethno-linguist who studied Ubykh in the 1930s (2). In this north-western Caucasian tongue one word sufficed to say: "If only you had not forced him to take once more all that I had prepared for them." One long word, only one, could express that. I used the past tense as Ubykh died twenty years ago in October 1992, when its last elderly speaker passed away.

If a Museum of Extinct Languages did exist, Ubykh would be in good company. I lost count of the many spoken tongues that passed away during the last century but it must approach one thousand. Today some 600 native languages are just about to go extinct, each spoken by less than fifty elders and no longer transmitted to children. The diagram below, composed on the basis of the latest available data (3), is cause for worry.



NB: the vertical axis represents the number of nearly extinct indigenous languages; the number in blue its relation (in percent) to the total number of native languages still spoken in same country.

The continental USA, distantly followed by Australia, hold the dubious distinction of having the highest number of vanishing endemic languages. The narrative thread is the same: in recent years, or

decades, their First Nations have massively shifted to English. A few tongues still resist, like Apache, Cherokee, Dakota, or Navajo, each with quite safe population levels above 15,000 speakers. But, as I write these lines, only one or two elders are left to speak Pawnee, Wichita, Osage, etc. Listen to these haunting words by Anita Edrezze, a (half) Yaqui Indian poet, lifted from a dusty issue of the *National Geographic* (4) that I kept through the years: 'All the dark birds, / but one, / rush from the river / leaving only the stillness / of their language.'

Will a few of the 'major' languages now spoken by millions and millions of people ultimately dominate and squash all others? Only the future will tell. But it would be an ironic twist of history if our world, in the end, resembles the gigantic Tower of Babel where – founding myths tell us – only one tongue prevailed.

(1) J.F. Cooper used literary license, distorting the name of the Mahican people, an Algonquian tribe originally living in the Hudson Valley and now settled in Wisconsin. Mahican was spoken until the 1930s and is now extinct.

(2) Nicholas Evans. *Dying Words. Endangered languages, what they tell us*. Wiley, 2010

(3) This analysis is based on data extracted from the 2009 edition of *Ethnologue – Languages of the World* and the *Atlas of the World's Languages* by Christopher Moseley, Routledge, 2007.

(4) *National Geographic*, October 1991. Special issue '1491 – America before Columbus'.